



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Jury finds Evangeline Parish man guilty of environmental crimes

BATON ROUGE – Yesterday, an Evangeline Parish jury convicted Joseph L. Jones, 57, on 15 of 15 felony counts and Plaisance Development Corporation (PDC), his company, on 15 of 15 felony counts for knowing violations of the Louisiana Water Control Law. Jones is the president and chairman of the board of Plaisance Development Corporation, a sewage treatment company responsible for operating and maintaining six sewage treatment facilities servicing residential subdivisions throughout Evangeline Parish.

In February 2010, Jones was arrested by Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality investigators and charged with knowing violations of PDC's Louisiana Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits by not sampling or submitting monitoring results, causing or allowing unpermitted discharges, and failing to provide proper operation and maintenance for the six facilities.

A jury deliberated for less than an hour before rendering the guilty verdicts before the Honorable Thomas F. Fuselier, 13th Judicial District Court judge, who presided over trial that began on Monday. The prosecution team consisted of Trent Brignac, 13th Judicial District Court District Attorney; Tim Fontenot, Assistant District Attorney; Ann Aucoin, 13th Judicial District Court legal assistant. DEQ's Criminal Counsel Mike Daniels was the lead prosecutor.

District Attorney Trent Brignac said, "Blatant disregard for the health and safety of the citizens of Louisiana through gross pollution of our waterways cannot be tolerated. Hopefully, the guilty verdicts will send the message that violations of the Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System are taken seriously and will be prosecuted." Brignac commended the thorough investigation by DEQ as well as the efforts of prosecutors Mike Daniels and Timmy Fontenot. Brignac stated that the joint effort between his office and DEQ was very effective.

"The Department of Environmental Quality will continue to seek aggressive punishment against any sewage treatment facility owner or operator who knowingly fails to abide by the regulations stated in their discharge permit," said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. "Any such violation of their permit is taken very seriously, as the ramifications for skirting the law can result in serious consequences for the local citizens that utilize those facilities' services on a daily basis. DEQ will continue to work with its local, state and federal partners in order to ensure that such matters are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Jones and Plaisance Development Corporation are scheduled to be sentenced in the 13th Judicial District Court in Ville Platte on October 19, 2011. Jones and Plaisance Development Corporation face similar charges for sewage treatment facilities in St. Landry Parish. Trial in St. Landry Parish is set for December 2011.

Violations can result in a fine of not less than \$5,000, but no more than \$50,000 per day of violation, or imprisonment for not more than three years, with or without hard labor, or both.